Diversity, Access and Equity Policy
Supporting a vibrant and inclusive community
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Date of endorsement: 25 March 2014
Mayor’s message

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the Moonee Valley Diversity, Access and Equity Policy. This policy supports Council’s continued commitment to an inclusive city that builds on the strengths of our diverse community.

On behalf of Council, I respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land called Moonee Valley – the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, their spirits, ancestors, elders and community members past and present. I also acknowledge the strength and breadth of diversity in our community and encourage everyone to work together with a commitment to, and in the spirit of, reconciliation.

Our community has expressed their vision for a friendly, safe, vibrant and diverse city in the Moonee Valley Next Generation 2035 Community Vision (MV2035). The Moonee Valley Diversity, Access and Equity Policy supports this vision by respecting the human rights of all our citizens, celebrating diversity and promoting participation in all aspects of community life.

The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 requires councils to consider human rights in developing laws, policies and delivering services. This Diversity, Access and Equity Policy has adopted a human rights framework by embedding the values of inclusion, access and participation by all.

These are reflected in the themes of the policy:
- fostering respect and celebrating diversity
- promoting participation
- accessible places and spaces
- leadership and representation

Under these themes sit Council commitments which will lead a whole-of-Council approach to promoting diversity and embedding access and equity outcomes for our community.

The policy will also be supported by a series of action plans that focus on specific areas of diversity to enhance access and equity for all.

In developing this policy, consultation was undertaken with a range of groups and organisations and I would like to acknowledge the valuable insights they have provided.

Through the adoption of this policy, I look forward to improving access and equity for all our community members.

Cr Jan Chantry
Moonee Valley Mayor
Introduction

The people of Moonee Valley place a high value on diversity. This is strongly reflected in the themes of the community vision, Moonee Valley Next Generation 2035 (MV2035), which includes:

Friendly and safe
- Community connection
- Multicultural and accepting
- Easy and safe to get around
- Young and aged feel safe and well looked after

Vibrant and diverse
- Thriving shopping strips
- Diverse, fun and exciting
- Creating opportunities for all

At the same time, the differences in the lived experience of people in our community have very real implications for how best to promote a more equitable and accessible community. While people in Moonee Valley are clear about the benefits of diversity, for many people, difference means they experience disability, disadvantage, discrimination and sometimes even violence.

Council also has many current policies, plans and strategies that contribute to access and equity for our community. They have helped inform the development of this policy. In turn, this policy will also help implement access and equity-related activities of our policies, plans and strategies.

At the heart of this policy is a respect for human rights. The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 requires councils to consider human rights when making decisions, developing laws, policies and delivering services. It contains 20 protected rights that promote and protect the values of FRED:

- Freedom
- Respect
- Equality
- Dignity

Adopting a human rights approach reinforces a focus on inclusion, access and equity. The themes include celebration, respect; participation; and accessible places and spaces. Importantly, the policy builds on the leadership and representation role Moonee Valley can take, not just in the local community, but to foster cohesion and inclusion across the Western region.

The values and principles emphasised during the consultation to develop this policy are identified in the word cloud opposite. The larger the word, the more often it was mentioned.
### Diversity, Access and Equity Policy summary

**GOAL:** support an inclusive city that respects the human rights of all its citizens, celebrates their diversity and promotes their participation in all aspects of community life.

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This document is presented in two parts:

**Part A** introduces the policy, including the policy goal, key themes and commitments relating to each theme.

**Part B** describes how the policy was developed including a review of the previous Diversity, Access and Social Inclusion Strategy (2009-13), a review of the international, national, state and local policy context, and a literature review and analysis of the consultation findings. Further details of the background research are in the Diversity Access and Equity Policy Background Paper.

Additional supporting documents include:

- Action plans focusing on specific areas of diversity. The action plans will develop strategies for implementation by Council in collaboration with its community partners, business and other levels of government.

- Council’s Reconciliation Policy and its annual action plans which outline specific commitments in relation to respect, recognition and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- Evaluation and monitoring reports which will incorporate a review of evidence and trends over time, with attention to measuring the impact of this policy in terms of both process and outcome.

All documents are available on Council’s website.
Part A: The Policy

The goal of this Diversity, Access and Equity Policy is to support an inclusive city that respects the human rights of all its citizens, celebrates their diversity and promotes their participation in all aspects of community life.

This will be achieved through commitments relating to four themes:

- **THEME 1** Fostering respect and celebrating diversity
- **THEME 2** Promoting participation
- **THEME 3** Creating accessible places and spaces
- **THEME 4** Leadership and representation
Fostering respect and celebrating diversity

- Respecting the human rights of all citizens
- Acknowledging and celebrating diversity
- Imagery in communications that reflects diversity

An inclusive city is one in which all people feel valued and celebrated for who they are, and confident that their human rights are respected.

Respect is about acknowledging and celebrating diversity. It helps build a cohesive, equitable and harmonious society, affirming that we are all entitled to participate. It prompts commitment to identifying and addressing barriers to participation – physical, social, economic and civic. Discrimination and violence is experienced by people in our municipality. Acknowledging this and encouraging our community to share their experiences may help to raise awareness and increase empathy.

Council plays an important role in building awareness and challenging assumptions through promoting, representing and celebrating diversity in our community. Using imagery that reflects our diversity creates awareness that Moonee Valley is a diverse community and tells people that we see and appreciate them.
Council will:

1. Acknowledge the value and contributions of our diverse communities and acknowledge and proactively address experiences of discrimination and violence by promoting positive messages and providing opportunities for impacted communities to share their experiences.

2. Celebrate festivals and events and encourage broad community participation in occasions that represent the diversity of identity in our community including ability, culture, faith and sexual orientation or gender identity.

3. Use data, definitions and imagery that positively represent the diversity of our community in Council publications and other communications.

4. Develop creative resources to promote the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 in the City of Moonee Valley.
Participation and social inclusion is about connecting with others in the community through opportunities to take part in recreation and leisure activities, learning and employment.

Council plays a vital role in ensuring accessible and inclusive planning, policy, services, activities and information, including place-based approaches. Participation is significantly enhanced where opportunities build on the strengths of and are designed in collaboration with the community.

Opportunities to participate in community life can create pathways for individuals to connect with groups different to themselves, enhancing understanding and learning across communities and delivers a friendlier, safer, more vibrant community.

Participation in employment and lifelong learning supports both active minds and connection with others. High employment levels and ongoing engagement in learning strengthens community cohesion and promotes the sustainability of the community and local businesses. Given the status of employment in our society, improving education, training and employment pathways is one of the most significant ways in which Moonee Valley can deliver its vision of a vibrant and diverse community.
Council will:

1. Provide accessible and inclusive planning, policy, services, activities and information and innovative delivery, including place-based approaches.

2. Regularly undertake audits to assess participation in Council services by people who experience disproportionate levels of exclusion and disadvantage, and make continuous improvements to facilitate inclusion.

3. Promote and support provision of formal and informal leisure, recreation, learning and community participation activities in the City of Moonee Valley that meet the diverse and complex needs of diverse population groups.

4. Promote local business, employment opportunities and education connections for all members of the community.
Creating accessible places and spaces

- Safe and welcoming environments
- Active planning and design
- Accessible infrastructure
- Shared use of facilities

A welcoming and accessible built environment, streetscapes and other spaces designed to make us feel welcome and safe are fundamental to inclusion and encouraging participation in our community.

Council adopts a social model of disability that recognises impairment and disadvantage are not inherent personal qualities. We can create or remove disabling barriers that are obstacles to inclusion and equity.

Active planning and design principles promote and motivate participation and social connection, and encourage the availability of and access to transport to get us where we want to go.

Shared use of facilities is also important including integration and co-location of services in a way that respects social and cultural diversity. Fostering social cohesion includes taking into account the multitude of affiliations many groups within a community are likely to have.
Council will:

1. Advocate for development of safe, welcoming and accessible built environment and streetscapes to encourage all citizens to use public spaces.

2. Promote active urban design and accessible transport options in Moonee Valley.

3. Foster a city that supports the varying needs of people at different life stages and different abilities, including creating a child-friendly, age-friendly and accessible municipality.

4. Ensure infrastructure and facilities planning takes account of demographic change.

5. Schedule measures to enhance ease of access of all Council infrastructure over time.

6. Together with community organisations, seek ways to maximise shared use of existing and future community infrastructure.
Council understands the importance of embedding awareness of diversity across the organisation. This includes developing real and relevant responses to equity and access on an ongoing basis, sharing the lessons learned across Council, as well as enhancing confidence in engaging with all members of the community. Learning from and sharing lessons with community partners, business and other levels of government is a key part of this.

Council recognises its role as a major employer within the municipality and the region and the importance of leadership in inclusive employment at all levels of the workforce.

Partnerships and advocacy are also important for Council. Council cannot by itself create an inclusive society. Nor can Council lead on every front.

Council can partner with community organisations, businesses and with other municipalities in the region and other levels of government on strategies to nurture these directions. Partnerships can deliver greater and more sustainable results. Council can also advocate on behalf of residents to organisations, businesses and other levels of government for equity and access outcomes for all community members.

Council’s commitment to meaningful community engagement is particularly important to promote the participation of those who could most benefit, but who often may seem hardest to reach. Strong relationships with organisations reflecting the diversity of the community also add depth and integrity to Council’s ability to develop appropriate responses to their needs.
Council will:

1. Lead by example as an employer through inclusive and flexible recruitment and employment practices that are transparent, innovative, measurable and accountable.

2. Embed a culture of awareness of diversity and enhance confidence in addressing diversity issues.

3. Strengthen partnerships through collaboration with organisations, businesses, regional networks and different levels of government to enhance equity and access activities and outcomes.

4. Support advocacy campaigns to improve access and equity for all community members.

5. Provide all community members with opportunities for civic participation and input to Council decision-making through relevant, proactive, planned and meaningful community engagement activities.

6. Promote access and equity initiatives to other organisations and businesses in the City of Moonee Valley and the broader region, to encourage others to also undertake such initiatives.
Part B: Background research

The policy was developed through a process that included a review of the previous Diversity, Access and Social Inclusion Strategy (2009-13), demographic analysis, policy and literature scans and consultation.

The Diversity, Access and Social Inclusion Strategy (2009-13) sought to promote accessible and inclusive activities and programs across Council. The strategy brought together the Disability Action Plan, the Multicultural Plan and further strategies to promote access and equity for diverse communities in Moonee Valley.

A review of the strategy identified particular successes in relation to embedding human rights and inclusive communications across the organisation as well as in the delivery of projects to support our diverse community.

The review considered the strengths and limitations of the existing structure and found that while there was benefit in an overarching approach to diversity planning, literature suggests that key diversity, access and social inclusion priorities are better addressed through targeted action plans that sit under an overarching policy.
Moonee Valley is a community of 118,000 people and is a diverse municipality with people who come from a range of backgrounds and experiences; are affiliated with a range of organisations and groups and live in diverse housing and family environments.

The Moonee Valley community experiences good health overall. However, health outcomes vary in relation to gender, socioeconomic status, education, and geographic location. These inequalities can be heightened for groups who experience discrimination and barriers to service access. Populations for consideration include: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; Women; Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer people; and people living with a disability.

Addressing some of these barriers to accessing services and facilities will further strengthen access and equity outcomes for the whole community.

Sex and gender

• There are slightly more females than males in the City of Moonee Valley.

• Women living in Moonee Valley experience a greater number of years lived with a disability, with a score of 4112.6 compared to 4013.1 in the Victorian Burden of Disease Study³. While women live longer on average, and experience less major diseases and injuries associated with high rates of mortality, their health outcomes are worse in other areas, including mental health, Alzheimer’s and other dementias.

• Women in Moonee Valley have lower rates of labour force participation and report lower weekly earnings than their male counterparts, impacting on their economic independence and financial security. Of women living in the municipality, 37 per cent were not in the labour force, compared to 24.4 per cent of men. In relation to weekly income, 29.3 per cent of women earn less than $300, compared to 21.7 per cent of men⁴.

• Taking into account these different experiences can help ensure that women and men feel equally able to participate in the community and access the services that respond appropriately to their needs.


Social and economic advantage

- The Social and Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Disadvantage measures the relative level of socio-economic disadvantage based on a range of Census characteristics. The SEIFA Index of Disadvantage for the City of Moonee Valley is 1027, slightly higher than Greater Melbourne. This is reflected in a low unemployment rate of 3.5 per cent compared to 7.3 per cent for Melbourne’s West. In general the population is also highly educated with 26 per cent of residents educated to Bachelor Degree or higher.

- While Moonee Valley has a high overall SEIFA Index of Disadvantage, meaning Moonee Valley as a whole experiences less disadvantage, there is variation across the municipality. Flemington in particular demonstrates significant disadvantage with a SEIFA Index of Disadvantage of 843. Ascot Vale and Avondale Heights are also below 1,000.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

- The 2011 ABS Census shows over 300 people in Moonee Valley identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have lower health outcomes and lower life expectancy attributable to past injustices and current inequities. Closing the Health Gap is about achieving health and life expectation equality for Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

5 Respect, recognition and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the focus of the Moonee Valley Reconciliation Policy and supporting annual action plans.
Cultural and language background

- The resident Moonee Valley population is diverse with 27 per cent of the city's people born overseas.
- Areas with the highest proportion of people born in a non-English speaking country include parts of Flemington, Ascot Vale and Avondale Heights.
- The largest overseas born group is Italian born (5 per cent). Along with many Maltese and Greek born residents, these residents tended to arrive in Moonee Valley several decades ago. There are larger concentrations of residents from these backgrounds in Moonee Valley’s northern and western suburbs such as Avondale Heights, Keilor East and Airport West.
- Nearly 30 per cent of Moonee Valley’s population spoke a language other than English at home as recorded at the 2011 ABS Census, with Italian as the most common language. Between 2006 and 2011, people who spoke a language other than English at home increased by 8.5 per cent. Languages that saw an increase included Mandarin, Hindi and Punjabi.
- More recent arrivals tend to be younger. Many are from the Horn of Africa and initially settle in the south of the municipality. There is a large Somali community in Flemington and an Ethiopian community spread across Flemington and Ascot Vale. Many have arrived as refugees.
- Many refugees from Africa and elsewhere have suffered significant trauma, sometimes resulting in ongoing physical or mental disability. Many do not speak English at home. Their needs range from general living skills to acquiring the skills to enter formal training or employment.
- Extensive research also demonstrates that many people from new and emerging communities struggle in their first five to ten years in Australia. Their needs include access to affordable housing, culturally responsive health care, effective education and pathways to employment. These needs are compounded by the cost of interpreter services, which further limits people’s access to needed information and services. The Productivity Commission has noted that public housing tenants often experience high rates of deep and persistent social exclusion. Internet access is also inequitably spread across Moonee Valley.

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6Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (2013) Valuing Victoria’s Diversity: State Budget Submission p.4
Sexual and gender identity

• The diversity of the Moonee Valley community includes Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) people. The National LGBTI Health Alliance has identified discrimination and social isolation as two key issues for this group. This is consistent with research findings that LGBTIQ people are more likely to experience harassment and prejudice motivated abuse and violence in their daily lives than the general population.

• Research suggests that discrimination directly contributes to poor health outcomes, especially in terms of mental health, for some LGBTIQ people. For example LGBTIQ people are at least two to three times more likely to experience depression and anxiety than the broader community9.

• There are also additional issues for some LGBTIQ people. For example, LGBTIQ people from some ethnic groups or diverse backgrounds can face additional difficulties ‘coming out’ including being ostracised by their ethnic community of origin.

• Older LGBTIQ people have lived through discrimination and research suggests that they are least likely to access mainstream services due to fear of discrimination and homophobia. This is due to the model of care and service provision that is based on traditional and narrow gender and sexual identities. Services by and large do not understand their needs and/or state that they treat everyone the same which usually means in a way that excludes LGBTIQ people.

Disability

• The 2011 ABS Census data identifies that 5 per cent (nearly 5,409 people) of Moonee Valley residents need help for daily living due to disability. This is slightly below that of Greater Melbourne overall but slightly higher for people over the age of 65. The Moonee Valley Community Survey 2013 identified that 17.9 per cent of survey respondents reported as having a permanent or long-term disability10.

• Research also shows that people experiencing disability in Australia have amongst the poorest quality of life among people with disabilities in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries. They are more than twice as likely as those without disabilities to be living near or below the poverty line. On workforce participation rates for people with disabilities, Australia ranks 21st out of the 29 OECD countries. Fewer than 40 per cent are employed, compared to about 80 per cent of non-disabled Australians11.

• The Productivity Commission recently concluded that over 80 per cent of people who are deeply and persistently socially excluded in Australia are people with disability or long term health conditions12.

• In Mooney Valley 5.7 per cent of women and 4.4 per cent of men require assistance with core activities13. Only 16 per cent of all women with a disability have any secondary education compared to 28 per cent of men with disabilities14. Women with a disability are 37.3 per cent more likely than women without a disability to report experiencing some form of intimate partner violence15.

10Moonee Valley City Council (2013) Moonee Valley Community Survey 2013
Carers

- The 2011 ABS Census indicates that 12 per cent of the Moonee Valley population (10,718 people) provide unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, long term illness or old age. This is higher than the Greater Melbourne percentage of 10.9 per cent and is likely to reflect the ageing population in the municipality.

- Many carers themselves are also ageing, have an ongoing illness or disability. As a result of their caring responsibilities, they are less likely to be in the paid workforce and are therefore also commonly on low incomes such as the disability carer’s pension\(^\text{16}\).

- In Moonee Valley 14.2 per cent of women provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, compared to 9.7 per cent of men\(^\text{17}\).

Life stages

- Diversity can also be considered in terms of life stages. For example, Moonee Valley children generally demonstrate less developmental vulnerability than children elsewhere in Victoria. However it is important to note that Moonee Valley has pockets of real socio-economic disadvantage and that children in these areas are likely to need much more support to reach their potential. This has implications for the strategies that need to be put in place to support a good foundation in life for all children.

- As at the 2011 ABS Census, there were 16,717 residents aged 65 years and over in the municipality. Older residents comprise 15.6 per cent of the population, a higher proportion than Greater Melbourne (13.1 per cent). As people age, access and equity barriers may increase. This includes mobility issues, access to support and participation opportunities and continued economic participation.

\(^{16}\text{Ibid.}\)
\(^{17}\text{Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) Census of Population and Housing, 2011}\)
International

Internationally, human rights are emphasised as a basis for policy development. An important cornerstone of human rights is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. The declaration sets out a broad range of fundamental human rights and freedoms to which all men and women, everywhere in the world, are entitled, without any distinction.

The declaration has become a foundation document that has inspired many legally-binding international human rights laws. This includes the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Federal Government legislation and policies

The Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 established the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (now known as the Australian Human Rights Commission) and gives it functions in relation to a number of international conventions.

At the national level other legislation relevant to this policy includes:

- The Racial Discrimination Act 1976 which promotes equality before the law regardless of race, colour or national or ethnic origin.
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1984 which promotes equality between men and women and eliminates discrimination based on sex.

- The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 which aims to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities, promote community acceptance of the principle that people with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as all members of the community, and ensure as far as practicable that people with disabilities have the same rights to equality before the law as other people in the community.
- The Age Discrimination Act 2004 which assists with ensuring that people are not treated any less favourably because of their age and provides assistance when people encounter age based discrimination.
- The Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013 introduced historic protections from 1 August 2013 for LGBTI Australians. The new laws mean that anyone discriminated against on the basis of the new protected attributes may take their complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission and ultimately the Federal Court.
- The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Act 2013 is intended to deliver a life-long approach to support people with disability through individualised funding, based on their personal needs and aspirations. This is a major shift from a programmatic basis of access to support which is usually limited to a specific number of places in a limited number of programs\textsuperscript{18}.

\textsuperscript{18}See further FAHCSIA (2013) Participating in DisabilityCare Australia Fact Sheet, June 6.
Other national policies or initiatives include:

- **The People of Australia – Australia’s Multicultural Policy**\(^\text{19}\) which was released in 2011 and reaffirmed the importance of a culturally diverse and socially cohesive nation.

- **National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy 2012–2015**, led by the Australian Human Rights Commission, this strategy sets out a three-year plan for government to work with community partners to combat racism across schools and higher education, the media, government service providers, workplaces and the internet.

- In March 2013 the then Australian Government released a new **Multicultural Access and Equity Policy: Respecting diversity. Improving responsiveness**. This follows a key recommendation of the Access and Equity Inquiry Panel that the existing Access and Equity Strategy and Framework be recast in the form of a set of firm commitments and implementation obligations.

- **The National Disability Strategy 2010–2020** sets out a ten-year national policy framework for improving the lives of Australians with a disability, their families and carers. It builds on the 1992 Disability Discrimination Act (Cth) which defines disability as including temporary or permanent physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory or neurological and learning disabilities.

- At the national level there is limited policy specific to sexual and gender diversity. There has been legislative reform to recognise some but not all of the rights and responsibilities of GLBTIQ people in the areas of tax, social security and family. An exception is the **National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Ageing and Aged Care Strategy** (the National LGBTI Strategy) released in 2012\(^\text{20}\). A further protection for gender diverse people in Australia occurred with the release of Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender by the Australian Government. The Guidelines make it easier for people to establish or change their sex or gender in Australian Government records including recording their sexual identity as M, F or X\(^\text{21}\).

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\(^\text{20}\)National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Ageing and Aged Care Strategy

State Government legislation, policies and initiatives

The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 aims to ensure authorities at the State and Local Government level take human rights into consideration. It contains 20 human rights that promote and protect the values of freedom, respect, equality and dignity, often referred to by the acronym FRED. Specific rights the charter protects include that:

- everyone is entitled to equal and effective protection against discrimination, and to enjoy their human rights without discrimination
- everyone has a right to take part in public life
- people are entitled to respect for their different family, religious or cultural backgrounds. They can enjoy their culture, declare and practice their religion and use their languages. Aboriginal persons hold distinct cultural rights.

Other important legislation in Victoria includes:

- Disability Act 2006
- Multicultural Victoria Act 2011
- Victorian Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001
- Carers Recognition Act 2012

Important State Government initiatives include:

- The Victorian Families Statements (2011, 2012) reinforced that “it remains vital that people feel a sense of belonging and take pride in our community”.
- The Victorian State Disability Plan (2013–16) demonstrates a commitment to upholding the rights of people experiencing disability. The framework of the plan emphasises four goals and the outcomes sought include better support for families and carers.
- The Multicultural Policy for Victoria (2012) outlines citizenship as a pillar “supporting and celebrating the rich cultural and linguistic diversity in Victoria”.
- The Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2011–2015 reinforces the relationship between good health for individuals and communities and opportunities for social connection, as well as cross sectoral action to promote wellbeing, including that people have equitable access to services and activities.
- Fair Foundations: The VicHealth framework for health equity is a planning tool for health promotion policy and practice. The tool outlines the social determinants of health inequities and suggests entry points for action.
- Plan Melbourne, the new Metropolitan Planning Strategy is the key state planning document. Included in the discussion paper for the strategy are a series of principles. Those relevant to the Diversity, Access and Equity Policy include Principle 3: Social and economic participation; and Principle 4: Strong communities.
- Well Proud developed by the GLBTI Health and Wellbeing Ministerial Advisory Committee, aims to assist the Department of Health, the Department of Human Services and funded agencies to improve the quality of care provided to their LGBTIQ clients.

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Local Government responsibilities

- The *Local Government Act 1989* provides the framework for the establishment and operation of Victorian councils. This includes the responsibility to serve communities for the good of all. It also states that one of the objectives is “to ensure that services and facilities provided by the Council are accessible and equitable” (3C(e)).

- Urban design has a clear role in how people feel about the place they live in and especially their willingness to make the maximum use of public spaces. The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* guides the use, development and protection of land in Victoria. It is concerned with the built environment and requires councils to consider the social impact of planning decisions.

- The Planning Act also requires councils to create a *Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS)*. The MSS takes a long term view of the future, setting out a vision and strategic framework for local planning that responds to State Government directions in a wide range of policy areas. This includes planning for infrastructure, transport and residential and economic development.

- The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* requires councils to protect, improve and promote public health and wellbeing in the community. A requirement under this Act is the development of a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan developed by councils every four years.

- Local Governments have further responsibilities under the Victorian *Disability Act 2006*. Along with government departments and other public sector agencies, Section 38 of the Act requires councils to develop and report on Disability Action Plans that promote four key outcomes: (i) Reduced barriers to people with a disability in accessing goods, services and facilities; (ii) Reduced barriers to people with a disability in obtaining and maintaining employment; (iii) Greater inclusion and participation of people with a disability in the community; (iv) Tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against people with a disability.

- The *Carers Recognition Act 2012* (the Carers Act) also specifies obligations for State Government agencies, and organisations including local councils. It is intended to encompass a broad range of care relationships from foster care to caring for an older person or someone with a disability or ongoing medical condition. The Carers Act includes a requirement to take into account not only the views of the carer but also their cultural identity, together with the views, cultural identity, needs and best interests of the person for whom they care, when decisions are made that impact on the carer and the care relationship.
Moonee Valley policy directions

Moonee Valley residents value a friendly, safe, vibrant and diverse city. Policy development builds on this community vision. Strategies and plans also acknowledge the need to address the changing preferences of the ageing population and to be more inclusive and welcoming of diversity including people experiencing disabilities and for people of different sexual orientations or gender identities.

The Moonee Valley Next Generation 2035 Community Vision (MV2035) articulates the community’s long-term vision. The theme of ‘friendly and safe’ identifies that there will be strong community connection and that the city should be multicultural and accepting with a welcoming and safe environment.

For many, a vibrant city is associated with diversity of cultures and multiculturalism and more generally diversity of its community. This theme also highlights the importance of “Celebrating the community, its diversity and encouraging social interaction through investment in arts and cultural activities” and “Young people, the elderly and Moonee Valley’s diverse ethnic mix as important contributors to and beneficiaries of arts, sports, recreation and cultural events.”

Strategies in the Council Plan (2013-17) aim to reinforce the community vision. The theme of vibrant and diverse incorporates an explicit objective to: Ensure all council services cater for the diverse communities within the city.

Council also has many current policies, plans and strategies that contribute to access and equity for our community. They have helped inform the development of this Policy. In turn, this Policy will also help implement access and equity-related activities of these policies, plans and strategies:

- Arts and Culture Plan
- Asset Management Policy
- City Sustainability Strategy
- Community Facilities Plan
- Healthy Ageing Strategy
- Integrated Transport Plan
- Leisure Strategy
- Library and Learning Strategy
- Moonee Valley Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Municipal Early Years Plan
- Municipal Strategic Statement
- Open Space Strategy
- Playspace Plan
- Reconciliation Policy
- Towards a Learning Community: Moonee Valley Learning Community Framework
- Walking and Cycling Strategy
- Youth Engagement Strategy
Lessons from other councils

Lessons from other councils were examined across three areas, with elements of the successful approaches as follows:

• **Multicultural practice** – incorporating the application of a ‘diversity lens’ to audits, reviews and performance measures helps to promote inclusion and prevent systemic race-based discrimination. Developing social marketing and communications campaigns also helps to build awareness and respect, and tailoring community engagement tools to encourage participation by diverse groups. A focus on recruitment of staff to reflect diversity of the community.

• **Disability** – adoption of a social model of disability by many local governments places the focus on barriers that exist in the community, not on the characteristics of the individual.

• **Sexual and gender diversity** – encouraging systemic approaches to inclusion including undertaking audits such as the Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV) LGBTI inclusive practice audit for health and human services and following guidelines, such as service audits, strategies to engage the LGBTIQ community in planning, staff training, creating welcoming environments.

Community development in practice

Community development frameworks are increasingly recognised as important to the delivery of policy aims, including building community participation and ownership. A community development philosophy helps give confidence that community needs will be accurately identified and typically focuses on promoting the application of key principles, including:

- promotion of inclusive and meaningful participation
- collaboration and partnerships across providers
- capacity building to support and strengthen and empower individuals and communities
- promotion of equity through the recognition and addressing of disadvantage and the inequitable distribution of resources, and
- development of intentional responses to ensure the efficient and effective use of scarce resources.

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26Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria; La Trobe University (2013) GLBTI-inclusive practice audit for health and human services

Consultation activities and key findings

Interviews were conducted with a range of external agencies, individuals and internal staff. Participants in the consultation were asked about the values or principles that most resonated with them when thinking about diversity, access and equity.

These are reflected in the word cloud below. The words that stand out the most are the ones that most resonated.

**Values and principles**
Practice
Participants were asked to consider the strengths of current approaches and opportunities to improve practice.

Fostering respect and celebrating diversity
Participants identified that Council does well in recognising special days with events, celebrations and media campaigns.

Participants noted that there are opportunities for Council to better reflect the diversity of the community through images and language used in publications and media. Specific examples included the need to acknowledge and represent LGBTIQ people and other diverse groups to challenge assumptions, build understanding and foster respect.

Promoting participation
It was identified that Council does well in providing information to the community and ensuring its publications and the website are accessible. Specific tailored programs to engage diverse communities were also highlighted, including Flemington Neighbourhood Renewal as well as community development approaches adopted by community centres, neighbourhood centres, neighbourhood houses, and libraries. Supporting volunteers was also highlighted as an important engagement initiative by Council. The Arts and Culture program at Council was also highlighted as inclusive and supportive of diversity.

Similarly, participants identified that Council plays an active role in fostering and promoting the Sustainable Employment and Economic Development (SEED) program, including sponsoring employment traineeships for diverse young people including within Council as well as partnering with other organisations for traineeships.

Challenges highlighted by participants included the need to recognise that some groups face multiple disadvantages. It was also felt that information needs to be provided in a range of formats and more could be done to provide information to a range of groups including through translation, interpreter and other communication services. Participants identified opportunities around audits and audit tools to better understand current service inclusion. Learning from services across Council including neighbourhood centres, libraries and Flemington Neighbourhood Renewal was also seen as an opportunity.
Accessible places and spaces
Council’s accessible communications, including the hearing loops established in key Council facilities, were highlighted as good examples of improving access. Council’s scooter/wheelchair (battery) recharge stations across the city were also highlighted.

Co-location of services and facilities were seen as key strengths of Council in responding to diverse cultural needs.

Participants also noted that there are different levels of accessibility and mobility compliance across Council facilities, particularly as some of Council’s buildings are old and retrofitting or upgrading is required. Improvements to footpaths and public infrastructure were also noted as an opportunity.

Leadership and representation
Partnerships were noted by participants as a key strength of Council. This included partnering to deliver programs, projects and initiatives. Specific examples included sport and recreation activities at Flemington as well as at leisure centres. Establishment or membership on committees and working groups were acknowledged as important initiatives. Other initiatives across Council were acknowledged including a prayer area for staff in Council facilities.

Participants of the consultation noted that Council has the potential to demonstrate leadership in the region. Some participants noted the importance of using and sharing data to understand the needs of our diverse community. It was also felt that training and embedding awareness and confidence in staff would help enhance the responsiveness of services. This also included confidence in designing and delivering consultation activities to encourage diverse community members to be active participants in decision-making.

It was also felt that as a major employer, Council could demonstrate leadership including the development of more flexible recruitment and employment conditions to encourage diversity in the workplace, at all levels of employment. This included promoting and encouraging gender equity across Council.
The development of the Diversity, Access and Equity Policy was coordinated by the Community Development team, with support provided by Meredith Carter & Associates.

Council would like to acknowledge the many people who contributed to the development of the Diversity, Access and Equity Policy. This includes community members and representatives from the following organisations or groups:

- Centre for Multicultural Youth
- Council on the Ageing Victoria
- Debney Meadows Primary School
- Department of Human Services
- Doutta Galla Community Health Service
- Faith Communities Council of Victoria
- Farnham Street Neighbourhood House
- Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley Local Learning & Employment Network
- Disability Reference Group
- Peers Inspiring Peers
- The Australian Research Centre in Sex Health & Society
- Valley Carers
- Victoria Police
- Wingate Avenue Neighbourhood House
- Women’s Health West
- Women with a Disability Victoria
- YMCA (Ascot Vale Leisure Centre)

Staff from across Council assisted in the development of the policy including representatives from: Aged and Disability; Arts and Culture; Communications; Community Development; Family and Children’s Services; Finance; Governance; Infrastructure; Leisure and Open Space; Library and Learning; Local Laws; Organisational Development; Strategic and Statutory Planning; Sustainability, Health and Economic Development; and Technical Services.
References


Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (2013) Valuing Victoria’s Diversity: State Budget Submission


Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria; La Trobe University (2013) GLBTI-inclusive practice audit for health and human services


Moonee Valley City Council (2013) Moonee Valley Health Profile


Quest Consulting (2013) Moonee Valley Learning Community Needs Analysis and Opportunities Assessment


